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ABSTRACT

Organizational development (OD) can be of value as a professional development tool in the school, especially where it can broaden the perspective of the teacher so that he can conceptualize the school as an organization with various related units working to achieve the same goal, see more clearly his place in the total educational program of the school, and see his place in the total school organization. This increase in the interdependence of teachers will be of real value as schools try to implement changes, such as school-based budgeting, team teaching, and the total curriculum, that involve the total school organization and as state departments of education try to decentralize some decision-making to the schools. Inservice programs on OD in Manitoba are described. (Author/IRT)

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THE USE OF ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL.

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The Present Situation in Education

Let us begin with the situation that confronts us. All schools in Australia today are faced by:

1) increased professionalism of teachers;
2) rapid change;
3) insufficient time and in some cases, training, to cope with these changes
4) the unique organisational characteristics of schools; and
5) concern about the lack of unity in education.

I would like to elaborate a little on some of these points before moving on to the relevance of Organisation Development (OD) in relation to these and to professional development.

Regarding the first point, the increased professionalism is evidenced by teachers' increased participation in decision-making and by decentralisation of authority in certain areas (e.g. curriculum) to the individual school level. Rapid change has resulted, or is resulting in, such innovations as team teaching, the total curriculum in N.S.W., in which the basic course of broad education has been grouped into six areas and school-based budgeting in South Australia. To my mind, all such changes demand from school staffs an increased awareness of the school's functioning as a total organisation. Therefore, at least, some professional development must be aimed at improving the functioning of the school as an organisation and this is where OD enters the picture. It can improve organisational processes such as communications, decision-making and goal-setting. Of course this should lead to better teamwork and, flowing from this I imagine, would be the added advantage of a less segmented approach to education and the development of more continuity in the education of the child. Concerning my third point, it is apparent that in preparing for, and implementing these changes, the problem for State schools, at least, is that the authority to commit time and resources lies outside the school. I shall return to this later. Also militating against these organisation-wide changes are some of the unique organisational characteristics of the school. In trying to determine school policy we become aware of the diffuseness of educational goals; teachers in primary schools expecially, I suspect, perceive a dyadic organisation because frequently there is no need for organisational groupings to communicate and in all schools there is often evident a low interdependence of teachers, so that the performance of a teacher in the history department, for example, does not greatly affect that of a teacher in the science department. My final point, of course, refers to the fact that our present approach to education is segmented with distinct breaks between Years 2 and 3, 6 and 7 and to a lesser extent, between Years 10 and 11, and finally, between Year 12 and tertiary education. Add to this the subject differentiations and we create further fragmentation of education.

Present trends, of course, are aimed at reducing such discontinuity and it is my belief that all these trends affect the organisational dimensions of the school, as it is impossible to implement change in one area without causing, at least, ripples in other areas.[1] I found evidence of this in research I conducted in 1975-76 in Canada. The introduction of school-based budgeting there was found to have an effect on the school's programmes, authority structure, communications, decision-making process, control systems and the roles of those in the school. Therefore, in introducing changes such as school-based budgeting there is a need to focus also on the organisational dimensions which support the change.

OD and the changes in Australian Education

This leads me to the relationship between OD and the situation confronting Australian schools at present and the answer to the question:

Is OD of any use in Australian schools?

I think the answer to that question is "yes" since it is my belief, having observed the use of OD in Manitoba, Canada, that, if school staff members are educated towards increased awareness of the school's functioning as an organisation, their perspective will be broadened. This broadened perspective will enable teachers to see greater relevance for them in organisation-wide changes, such as school-based budgeting, or the operation of a total curriculum, which affects the structure and function of the organisation (i.e. the school). In my research on school-based budgeting in Canada, I found that some of the teachers failed to see the relevance of budget control for them and so were not committed to budget development. These were often teachers whose perspective was limited to their own classroom and nothing outside it was relevant to them.

To return to the relationship between OD and the present situation, where I have focussed on the introduction of organisation-wide changes in schools, we can see the relationship if we look at some of the definitions and aims of OD.

French and Bell[2] see OD as being:

> . . . a long-range effort to improve an organisation's problem-solving and renewal processes, particularly through a more effective and collaborative management of organisation culture - with special emphasis on the assistance of a change agent, or catalyst, and the use of the theory and technology of applied behavioural science, including action research.

I would imagine that any set of procedures that can improve an organisation's problem-solving processes is of tremendous value to schools today. Since Lippitt sees organisational renewal as allowing the organisation ". . .to become or remain viable, to adapt to new conditions, to solve problems, to learn from experiences. . ."[3], the same sentiments, I am sure, would apply.

The close relationship can also be seen in the fact that OD strategies tend to create increased openness, an ease of interpersonal relations and to aid decentralisation of decision-making - a position school staffs are moving towards as they develop their own budgets. Owens and Steinhoff[4] claim that OD may lead to the adoption of a new programme or curriculum or the restructuring of the organisation. Banman[5] sees OD as a long-range effort to introduce planned change based on a diagnosis which is shared by the organisation's members. In suggesting changes such as school-based budgeting and the implementation of a total curriculum, it can only be assumed that the various State Departments of Education have carried out the diagnosis on behalf of schools. However, I believe it would be worthwhile to allow schools to plan the actual implementation of these changes at the school level. This is where OD could be useful in the implementation of the change in a way best suited to the needs, resources and capabilities of the staff in <u>each</u> school. I believe this, because basic to all OD efforts is the attempt to tap the human resources of the organisation by team building, so that some of the problems created by the uniqueness of the school's organisational characteristics are reduced and, instead of teachers working in isolation we have shared responsibility in the school for the implementation and functioning of the school budget. This, of course, implies a collaboration between competing groups within the organisation and interpersonal relationships that encourage openness and trust and, if the OD effort has been successful, these are worthwhile objectives to have achieved. As Banman has stated[6], in an effective OD effort each member of the organ-

isation begins to see himself as a resource to others and becomes willing to provide help to others when asked to do so.

By way of summarising this relationship, I see OD as being of use in the introduction of changes facing Australian schools in that:

1) its use can help the teacher see his place in the organisation more clearly;

2) it can increase the teacher's awareness of the school as a unified organisation by his becoming more aware and more skilled in using the organisational processes at work; and

3) OD works along power-equalising lines rather than the exercise of coercive power. This could facilitate the transfer of power from the central authority to the local level as is required in changes such as school-based budgeting and local curriculum development. It also provides an opportunity for staff to develop their own expertise in e.g. communication and decision-making skills and to become involved in planning for these changes which, as research[7] has shown, can reduce resistance to change. Therefore, the use of OD for professional development should contribute to success in the implementation and operation of the organisation-wide changes to which I have been referring.

OD in Manitoba

However, the use of OD is not without its problems; the main ones being:

time;
money:and
access to OD consultants.

The use of OD consultants is usually an expensive business and at present we are faced with a financial situation in education that would seem to prohibit the use of such consultants. Secondly, you might ask - when would there be time for an OD intervention in schools? Finally, there is only a limited number of OD specialists in Australian education.

To provide a solution to at least some of these problems, I would like to refer to the way in which the Provincial Department of Education in Manitoba was making use of OD interventions.

To take the first problem - time. Such problems in the Manitoban system are alleviated by legislation. Each school division is bound by law to allow ten days during the school year for the professional development of teachers, school planning , programming and administration. Unless some similar arrangement is made here I see no way of overcoming the problem of lack of time. It is difficult for staff members to develop a curriculum after school hours and virtually impossible for OD to operate in similar fashion.

To overcome the cost of hiring outside consultants the Manitoban Department has permanently employed professionals to offer an OD consultative service. This team conducts workshops in OD stressing team building, communication skills, goal-setting and interpersonal relations.

A typical OD programme is outlined below. At the request of the Super-

of the Superintendent of a division, consultants from the Professional Development Branch are invited to conduct an OD workshop. Discussions with the Superintendent help diagnose the needs of the division and an outline of the components of an OD programme is drawn up. The first stage comprises an OD workshop for the divisional school board and superintendent, stressing concepts of team building and goal-setting. The second stage involves the superintendent and school administrators. It focusses on the skills of goal clarification, team building, conflict resolution, problem-solving, decision-making and organisational climate, while emphasising the objectives of effectiveness and efficiency. In the third stage the programme involves individual schools and principals. Goal clarification and team building are stressed and, incorporated into an ongoing plan of action for the school, are components of communication skills, cooperation and commitment to objectives, as determined by the needs of the school staff.

In these workshops the consultants have permission from the copyright owners to use commercially prepared material such as I have here today. One administrative team-building instrument that has been used is the Organisation Diagnosis and Improvement Strategies: An Instrumented Individual and Group Approach to Self-Development by Horstein and Tichy[8]. This instrument consists of self-administered activities, which can be used for individual self-study, as a skill development workshop, a team development workshop or for group action planning. Its desired outcome is the development of skills in organisational diagnosis and a strategy for organisational improvement. One of its advantages is its flexibility in terms of time. It can be used, by including or excluding certain activities, during a period ranging from three hours to three days.

It has been found that these workshops have resulted in improved interaction and openness among members of the total school organisation, and in a sense of involvement and team effort in matters of decision making and responsibility. It would appear that these would be desirable outcomes in our own schools as the trend towards decentralisation increases.

Administrators in Manitoban schools are using the skills and techniques of OD to assist teachers

and I quote[9]: 1. in the development, comprehension and appreciation of learning theories, styles and skills through individual and team workshops. These workshops include concepts of individualising, diagnosing and prescribing techniques to enable the teacher to help the student learn what is required in the manner best suited to him.

2. to assist teachers relate with empathy to each student through a process of paraphrasing or reflecting, student-teacher emotional responses and positive reinforcement. Workshop programs are conducted in communication skills, giving and receiving feedback and effective listening.

3. to improve the interpersonal relationships of teachers in teams, between teacher and principal, and between teachers, students and parents. Continuous reinforcement of group effort is sustained to emphasise cooperation and team achievement of goals.

It soon became evident that the demand for the services of these consultants was exceeding the capacity to provide them. Consequently the Professional Development Branch embarked on another programme aimed at providing more consultants, yet also keeping consultancy costs down. This was to be achieved by training their own consultants. Thus a Professional Development Leadership Training Project was initiated.

The programme covered a two year period and incorporated 80 days of training. It involved a high degree of commitment on the part of the participants as all continued in their full-time positions, using their own free time to meet the demands of the programme. Twenty four participants representing school divisions across the Province were selected on the basis of their potential leadership qualities.

Most of them held Administrative positions, e.g. assistant superintendents and principals, in their divisions. However, also included, were guidance counsellors, a psychologist and members of the Professional Development Branch of the Teachers' Society.

The programme was designed to develop in participants the capability of becoming resource persons for professional development in their local school division. A variety of instructional techniques such as simulated experiences, lecturettes, laboratory training, reading assignments, and field experience were included in the programme design. Particular areas of expertise which the programme focussed on included communications, confrontation of problems and issues, decision-making, resolution of conflict, planning and innovation.

I observed an example of the type of work carried out by these consultants in a junior high school in Winnipeg. The school had undergone a leadership change and the former authoritarian principal had been replaced by a more democratic one. The result of this was that, when called on to make decisions the staff was unable to meet the challenge, having had little previous experience in decision-making. The consultants designed and conducted a programme for the staff which improved its team decision-making ability. There was also provision made for any follow-up deemed necessary. Consequently, the staff was helped adapt to the leadership style of the new principal. I have included as an example the programme which was designed by the team for this school:

Contract

1) To create awareness in staff members of behaviours that affect group decision-making;

2) to have staff members learn some decision-making skills.

Handouts

Materials on decision-making and OD.

Programme

Day 1

1) Overview of proposed plans for two days.
2) Explanation of Team Decision Making Seale.
3) Form six teams - brainstorm - identify educational issues of concern - evaluate and chart.
4) Priorising - evaluate and chart.
5) Three teams discuss, three teams observe.
6) Reverse roles - alternate teams, discuss and observe.
7) Debrief day's learning re decision-making.

Day 2

1) Lecturette on problem solving.

2) Use of problem solving techniques in discussion of an educational issue (6 teams).
3) Evaluation of small group effectiveness.
4) Teams report to total staff.
5) Total staff meeting.
6) Debriefing.

Of course, apart from cost-saving, another advantage in using consultants who belong to the organisation is the fact that they are already committed to improving it and they are likely to be accorded trust and respect from their peers. In addition, they are already familiar with existing norms, structures and procedures. However, a disadvantage of the Manitoba training project just cited was that after completing the training all participants were promoted by their divisions to positions which, at least initially, left little time for consulting owing to increased responsibility.

Before leaving the topic of the training of consultants, I would like to bring to your attention the existence of instructional systems developed by, for example, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (N.W.R.E.L.) in the United States. One of their systems is the P.E.T.C. system (Preparing Educational Training Consultants). It comes in three 'kits' and is intended for use by educators at any level, who wish to acquire consulting skills for training others.

PETC I focusses on the development of skills trainers who ultimately would be able to work with small groups to assist in improving process skills such as goal-setting, problem-solving, communicating, influencing, decision-making, etc.

PETC II focusses on consulting and is designed to help a cadre of educators acquire process training and consulting skills so they can then temporarily help educators work more effectively in groups; i.e. committees, task forces and faculties.

PETC III focusses on OD and organisational self-renewal. It is planned as an instructional strategy by which organisations can build their own capacity to carry out OD projects by regular staff members on a continuous basis and to provide OD training and consultation as needed to maintain expected levels of capabilities for all those in change agent roles.

Obviously, a careful analysis of such systems is necessary before they can be used. However, as these systems increase in popularity and more commercially prepared 'kits' appear on the market, quality will continue to improve. Nevertheless, I believe, it is better that such professional development efforts are at least monitored by professional officers from various resource centres or regional offices. These are the people I see as likely candidates for training as consultants.

Conclusion

In conclusion after observing and conducting research in Canada, my experiences have led me to believe that OD can be of value as a professional development tool in schools. This is especially so where it can broaden the perspective of the teacher so that he can:

1) Conceptualize the school as an organisation with various related units working to achieve the same goal, i.e. the continuous

education of the child;

2) see more clearly his place in the total educational programme of the school; and

3) see his place in the total school organisation.

This increase in the interdependence of teachers will be of real value firstly, as schools try to implement changes, such as school-based budgeting, team teaching and the total curriculum, which involve the total school organisation and secondly as state departments of education try to decentralise some decision making to the schools. In relation to the latter point, I see OD interventions as being particularly useful in aiding the transfer of power to principals and teachers who have been conditioned in a system in which it has been traditional for most decisions to be made by a central authority.

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